

By Bob Keefe

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WASHINGTON -- Georgia's representatives in Congress stuck to party lines in Wednesday's vote to repeal health care legislation, while one Georgia congressman introduced a bill aimed at replacing some of the provisions of the legislation.

All eight of Georgia's Republicans in the House voted for repealing the controversial law; all five Georgia Democrats voted against repeal.

Prior to the vote, Republican Rep. Paul Broun of Athens, a physician by training, introduced a possible replacement for the health care legislation in the unlikely chance that the Senate and President Barack Obama also approve repeal.

Broun's proposal would create state-run, high-risk insurance pools and cooperatives for businesses and individuals so uninsured Americans could voluntarily obtain insurance.

It also would allow individuals and businesses to deduct 100 percent of their health care expenses, including insurance premiums, and let consumers buy insurance from companies that operate in states other than their own.

Before the new Republican-led House considers replacing the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act -- Obamacare as the GOP calls it -- lawmakers have to complete the repeal of it, which appears unlikely.

Wednesday's 245-189 House vote to repeal is a step in that direction, but is mainly only a symbolic one aimed at delivering on campaign promises. The Democratic-controlled Senate is not expected to agree to repeal the legislation and Obama is not expected to sign any repeal legislation.

Speaking at a health care conference in Atlanta on Wednesday, Gov. Nathan Deal reiterated his opposition to the law, which he said would cost the state \$2.5 billion in additional Medicaid costs. Georgia is one of more than two dozen suing to overturn the law.

Wednesday's House vote came after two days of debate by lawmakers, who often resurrected health care rhetoric that has reverberated throughout the country for more than two years.

"With the passage of Obamacare, liberals have drilled holes in the rock and the foundation of our nation," Broun said in presenting his bill.

Democratic Rep. John Lewis of Atlanta, meanwhile, said the idea of repeal was outrageous.

"It is unbelievable that with so many people out of work and millions of people uninsured, the first act of this new Congress is to take health care away from people who just got coverage," Lewis said.

New Republican Rep. Rob Woodall of Lawrenceville offered a different perspective, reflecting the sentiment of conservatives who helped to elect him in November's GOP sweep.

"There are a lot of tough decisions to be made in the 112th Congress," Woodall said in a statement. "For me, repealing the egregious Obama health care bill will not be one of them. This decision is easy."

Democratic Rep. Sanford Bishop of Albany nearly got defeated in November, in part because of conservatives' angst over his support of the health care legislation.

Wednesday, Bishop didn't waver. He voted against the repeal.

"There are too many good things in the health care law that would ... benefit the people of the second district for me to vote against," Bishop said.